



◀ WORKING TO INCREASE MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT RATES

I was pleased to be honored by the Connecticut Catholic Hospital Council for my efforts to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates to the state's health care providers. David Benfer, president and CEO of the Saint Raphael Health Care System, presented the award.

Aid For Our Community

A very important part of my job representing the people of the 10th state Senate District is ensuring New Haven and West Haven receive their fair share of state funding. I am pleased to report the following grants and reimbursements from the state in Fiscal Year 2008–2009:

	Fiscal Year 08–09
Total Education Grants	\$191,778,221
Town Aid Road Fund Grant	\$918,855
Mashantucket Pequot & Mohegan Fund Grant	\$11,066,601
Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP)	\$2,250,307
Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)	\$44,045,550
Total	\$250,059,535

Progress Toward a New West Haven Rail Station

I'm proud to announce—through hard work by myself and other area legislators—that earlier this year, \$13.5 million in bonding for the development of a new rail station in West Haven was approved by the State Bond Commission. The need for additional access to Metro-North trains between New Haven and Milford has been established as a key ingredient for improved circulation and reduced congestion all along Connecticut's shoreline. It is my hope that this project will go a long way toward addressing this critical issue.



I will continue to work with our legislative delegation, local officials and the state Department of Transportation to move this project forward. It is anticipated that the official groundbreaking for the new station will take place a little over a year from now.

Health Care Initiatives For Women and Newborns

We sought to extend prenatal care to more women with a new law that will provide immediate insurance coverage and timely health care services to low-income pregnant women. We know there's no time to lose during pregnancy, and we know prenatal care improves a mother's health and birth outcomes, so we streamlined the process with presumptive HUSKY eligibility. In other health care matters, the Senate would have required more detailed information in written mammography reports to avoid misdiagnoses and would have required hospitals to screen newborns for cystic fibrosis. In each case, early, accurate findings can dramatically improve a patient's prognosis. Unfortunately, the session was adjourned before the House could act on these important measures.



State Senator Toni Harp

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Dear Neighbor:

By almost any measure, the nation is in a recession, and states across America are feeling the effects.

Connecticut faces these uncertain times with a biennial budget that makes important investments in local schools, roads, health care, school readiness, municipal aid, criminal justice programs, and other vital needs.

However, state revenue forecasts continue to drop, and just as Connecticut's families are tightening their belts, so must our state government. While we held the line on any new spending during this past legislative session, we were still able to find ways to help the people of our state by enacting long-needed reforms in our criminal justice system, health care, consumer protection, and the environment.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Toni Harp
State Senator



I'm proud to
represent the
10th Senate District:
New Haven
West Haven



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State Senator
Toni Harp
10TH DISTRICT



LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Protecting Homeowners & Our Economy

This year, I supported comprehensive legislation designed to keep families in their homes and proactively protect our state's economy from the national subprime mortgage crisis. Across the country, quality of life is being diminished, home values are plummeting and families are faced with difficult choices as home foreclosure rates have skyrocketed 75 percent since 2006.

Connecticut has one of the highest home foreclosure rates in the country. About 71,000 Connecticut mortgages are adjustable-rate, high-interest subprime mortgages, and 21,000 of those will reset to a higher rate in the next 12 months.

The legislation we passed created a special loan program, which allows the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to purchase home loans from lenders and place eligible borrowers on affordable payment schedules for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages. We also re-initiated the state's Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program and gave CHFA the authority to purchase foreclosed homes to create affordable and supportive housing. These programs will help thousands of Connecticut families and will help prevent the mass foreclosures other states have experienced over the past year.

Additionally, we created a foreclosure mediation program for lenders and borrowers, established a mortgage crisis job-training team, and created new restrictions and licensing requirements for mortgage lenders and brokers to prevent predatory lending practices in the future. All these initiatives were created without increasing state spending.



Global Warming Solutions

Connecticut has once again shown that it is a leader in environmental protection with the passage of a bill that creates a timeline and targets through 2050 for Connecticut to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. "An Act Concerning Connecticut Global Warming Solutions" unanimously passed the Senate after overwhelming passage in the House. The new law requires Connecticut to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to at least 10 percent below 1990 levels by January 1, 2020, and to at least 80 percent below 2001 levels by January 1, 2050. It is estimated that in 1990, Connecticut emitted 45 million metric tons of greenhouse gases. Most of these gases are the result of burning fossil fuels for transportation, though electric generation and residential energy use also contribute heavily.

Toy Safety

Protecting the health and safety of the children in Connecticut will always be a major priority. We approved legislation to protect our children from the rising number of unsafe toys that may be contaminated with hazardous materials. It bans children's toys and other products if they fail to comply with stricter limits for lead and prohibits the sale of items marketed for children that contain asbestos. Connecticut stores must also post notices to inform consumers of recalled products and maintain reports detailing how recalled products were returned to the manufacturer or destroyed.



Grandparents and Relative Caregivers

For more than 52,000 Connecticut children, family life means living in households led by grandparents or other relatives instead of biological parents. In recognition of that trend, we passed a new law—unanimous in the House and Senate—to help eligible caregivers receive additional state assistance. We recognize that it is preferable and healthier for children to be raised in the stable surroundings these households



provide, especially after a nuclear family breaks up. Current law allows a Probate Court to qualify next-generation caregivers for one-time grants for such things as a bed, a winter coat or even summer camp. The new law grants the state Superior Court authority to make these extended families eligible for similar expenses.

Correcting Health Care Disparities

As a basic human right, all Connecticut residents should have equal access to the highest quality health care services available. However, research and experience have shown that many people encounter barriers to quality health care based on race, ethnicity, national origin and linguistic ability. I supported the creation of a Commission on Health Equity that will work to identify



the causes of disparities in our health care system and eliminate them. The commission will also work to improve the health of all Connecticut residents and will report back to the legislature with recommendations by June 1, 2010.

Cracking Down on Hate Crimes

Last year, Connecticut suffered through a rash of racist, intimidating noose incidents. A black Coast Guard Academy cadet found a noose in his luggage and another noose was left in the office of a Coast Guard race relations officer. A half-dozen nooses were found at construction sites in Stamford and West Hartford. Another noose was left under the patrol car of a black Bridgeport police officer. Nooses are a repugnant symbol of racial hatred rooted in the lynching of black Americans. This session, the General Assembly unanimously passed, and Governor Rell signed, legislation that makes it a hate crime—on par with cross burning—to hang a noose on public or private property with the intent to intimidate or harass another person.



Criminal Justice Reforms

Crime is an issue that has been on the minds of many state residents, and the General Assembly took strong and decisive action this year on a variety of criminal justice matters. We created the new crime of "home invasion," which carries a mandatory 10-year minimum jail term, and created a full-time, professional Board of Pardons and Parole. We also approved doubling and tripling prison sentences for the most violent of criminals while simultaneously giving criminal justice professionals the \$10 million needed to enhance public safety. That money will be used to prosecute repeat offenders, track sexual offenders, hire more investigators and probation officers, and increase funding for prisoner re-entry programs.

Tougher Requirements, Education for Teen Drivers

Communities across the state are grieving over the loss of young lives in tragic automobile accidents. The General Assembly made several changes this year to help prevent fatal accidents involving teenage drivers and passengers. Teens are now required to spend more time behind the wheel before they can get a driver's license, and they cannot drive with passengers under age 18, who are not immediate family, for a year. Teens will also face harsh penalties—including license suspensions—for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, reckless driving, speeding, street racing and using a cell phone while driving. While we cannot prevent every accident, if we can save just one family from tragedy, these new laws will be a success.

